

CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CHINA-

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UCA News - www.ucanews.com

Kim Jong-il visits church but ‘remains hardline’

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By [ucanews.com](http://www.ucanews.com) reporter, Jilin, and Paul Hwang, Seoul

A whistle-stop visit by North Korean leader Kim Jong-il to a church in China is not a sign the secretive communist regime’s stance towards religion is softening, South Korean Catholics say.

Kim visited a Catholic church in Jilin in northeastern China during his Aug. 20-25 trip to the country.

The church visit immediately sparked speculation North Korea might relax its rigid stance towards Catholicism and other religions.

“It could be some kind of message related toward religion including Catholicism,” the Hankyoreh daily quoted an anonymous government official saying.

But Church people in South Korea were quick to dismiss such speculation.

It goes too far to say his visit has a hidden message, Father Baptist John Kim Hun-il told [ucanews.com](http://www.ucanews.com) on Sept. 1

“It seems the visit was just part of his trip,” the Korean Bishop’s Conference official added.

“North Korea has not given any sign of improving its relationship not only with the Catholic Church but with other religions in South Korea.”

Peter Park Chang-ho, secretary of Seoul Archdiocese’s Korea Reconciliation Committee agreed.

“It’s all guess work. His Church visit was a part of a personal ‘pilgrimage,’” he said.

During this trip, Kim visited several places where his father and predecessor Kim Il-sung had stayed.

Church sources in Jilin told ucanews.com that Father Nicholas Liu Wenhui, the parish priest, escorted Kim around the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church on Aug. 26.

Kim only spent five minutes in the church but told the priest that his father had once stayed there during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), they said.

Built in 1926, the Gothic church on the northern bank of the Songhua River was a former Jilin diocese cathedral.

It was declared a historical monument by the Jilin provincial government in 1999.

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Pope donates \$30,000 to China flood relief work

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By ucanews.com reporter, Shijiazhuang

Pope Benedict XVI has donated US\$30,000 toward relief work following devastating floods in several parts of China.

The donation was handed to Jinde Charities, the national Shijiazhuang-based Catholic charitable organization, through the Vatican's Christian and human development agency, Pontifical Council Cor Unum (one heart) on Aug. 21.

Shijiazhuang is the capital of Hebei province in northern China.

I'm very moved by the Pope's concern for China and I'm sure the Chinese people feel the same way too, said Jinde vice-director Father John Ren Daihai.

"The love shown by the Pope offers great encouragement to all Jinde staff. We felt so excited and happy at the news of the donation. It will spur us on to do more and better," he said.

The donation is for all people in need without any distinction, Cor Unum personnel said in a statement.

“The Pope mourned deeply for the many victims of the disastrous floods in China, especially in Gansu province. He offered his prayers for their souls, their relatives and all the survivors who have suffered painful consequences,” the Cor Unum statement said.

An Aug. 8 mudslide in Zhouqu county, northwestern Gansu province, claimed 1,248 lives, and more than 400 people are still missing.

About a dozen Catholics died in that disaster, according to an “underground” priest who used to serve in Zhouqu.

Another mudslide in Gongshan county in Yunnan province on Aug. 18 saw four Catholic families lose several family members.

Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org
ASIA/CHINA

Xi Ning celebrates first baptisms with 5 Tibetan catechumens

Xi Ning (Agenzia Fides) – Over 700 faithful of the Catholic community of the Diocese of Xi Ning, in the Province of Qing Hai attended the first baptism to take place in their community. The five Tibetan catechumens were baptized after the opening of the community, which took place on the Solemnity of the Assumption, 15 August. According to information collected by Fides, addressing the many believers who received them with joy and enthusiasm, one of the newly baptized said: "It is so beautiful to become a member of the great family of the Church!"

The priest, Fr. Li Dong Sheng, who also served as the catechist of these catechumens from Tibet, highlighted that "the first baptism following the opening of our community, that of the Tibetan catechumens, takes on special significance and it will give a great impetus to the development of our small community." Thus, in the village of Tu Guan Gou, which has about 400 Tibetans, there are already nine newly baptized Tibetans. Now there are several catechumens studying the Catechism of the Catholic Church through pastoral care of Fr. Li, assisted by lay catechists and even by the newly baptized themselves.

The Diocese of Xi Ning, in the Province of Qing Hai, in 1937 was a Apostolic Prefecture run by the Divine Word Missionaries. Today, the community has more than 3,000 faithful, 6 priests, 17 religious sisters, 3 churches, and 19 mission stations. (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 08/30/2010)

Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org
ASIA/CHINA

“The Letters of John Paul II to Priests for Holy Thursday” to continue in the spirit of the Year for Priests

Shi Jia Zhuang (Agenzia Fides) – Although the Year for Priests has concluded, the journey of priestly formation and deepening in the theme of the priesthood in the Catholic world on the Chinese mainland continues. With this objective, "HeBei Faith Press" has published "Letters of John Paul II to Priests for Holy Thursday." The 3,000 copies of the first edition, published last April, have been distributed to all the Chinese priests of all the dioceses on the mainland, arousing great interest and appreciation. The publishing house is now seeking funds to print a second edition of the book, which is part of a pastoral series, to be distributed to about 2,000 seminarians.

The Preface of the book reads: "Pope Benedict XVI declared a Year for Priests from June 19, 2009 to June 19, 2010... The world fixed its gaze once again on its over 400,000 priests. During his pontificate - 1979 to 2005 - almost every year the beloved Pope John Paul II published a Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday ... After meticulous work and with the help of the Catholic community in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao, as well as with the full support of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, we have finally been able to publish the 24 Letters to Priests (in addition to the Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis). Unfortunately, due to the limited time and lack of resources, we could not complete the preparation of the letters from the years 1981, 1993, and 2003. There are also some translations that do not correspond to the language in use on the mainland. However, we thank everyone who contributed to this work in various ways, translators, donors, and friends, invoking God's blessing on them." (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 27/08/2010)

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

Lone woman brings Tibetans to Catholicism

Published Date: August 24, 2010

By ucanews.com reporter, Xining

A Chinese Catholic woman has pulled off a rare feat by encouraging a number of Buddhists to convert to Catholicism in the Sino-Tibetan province of Qinghai.

Father Joseph Li Dongsheng, parish priest of Xining Church, praised the woman's achievement in a region that has only 4,000 Catholics in a total population of one million.

“I never even thought of converting ethnic Tibetans myself as they are so deeply rooted in Buddhism. It's almost impossible,” he said.

The five new Catholics, aged from 20 to over 50, come from three families of the same clan and were Buddhists since childhood.

When the woman married into the family two years ago, she told them about her faith and gave them the Bible and some religious books to read.

“They didn’t accept it at first,” said Father Li. “But after reading the books, they got a better idea of our faith and started to feel how great God is. Now, at Lunar New Year, they even hang the icons of Jesus and the Blessed Mother up at home.”

The five were baptized along with five other converts on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, at a ceremony attended by 700 people.

Father Li says he plans to give them ongoing care and education to help sustain their faith as “they may have to face discrimination in this Buddhist environment.”

The Record, Australia

St Vinnies up and running in China

Wednesday, 18 August 2010

By Anthony Barich

In a sign that things may be moving forward in China, the St Vincent de Paul Society has established charities in the atheist country - albeit under a non-Catholic name.

THE Society of St Vincent de Paul has established 20 parish-based charity centres in China, but must operate under a different name to placate a government suspicious of the charity organisation’s ties to the Pope.

The Society has established centres in and around the city of Guangzhou (Canton) in the Guangdong Province, China’s southernmost mainland province, run in collaboration with local Catholic charities aligned with the government-sanctioned Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

The Society’s international President General Michael Thio, in Perth earlier this month, said that he made it clear to the Chinese government that the Society is present all over the world and that its main aim is to promote its mission to help alleviate the suffering of the poor, “and there is much to do in this area”.

The operations are the fruit of a year of planning before discussions with the Chinese government began three years ago, which Mr Thio said was receptive to the Society “so long

as we followed the norms of the country – the (parish charities) must report to the parish community, which in turn reports to the local council”.

Mr Thio said that his recent visits to Canton have revealed that the Society’s collaboration with local Catholic charities in assisting the poor is doing well, and “so far we have not faced any problems as we don’t get involved in any political activities but focus on helping the poor”.

The Society steers clear of the “underground Church”, he said, which makes operations easier.

“When we go to a new country we’re very careful we don’t get into any political sidings, we lean only towards our charitable leanings. That gives us the freedom to be able to do the work of the mission of the society,” Mr Thio said. He believes that it is only a matter of time before China establishes relations with the Holy See, as “the new breed of leaders in China are more open and always think in terms of progress”.

“They know they have to move forward and engage with the world. This is the feeling I get when I go there,” he said. “The present Holy Father is very open, he knows China is going stay engaged with (the Holy See) and he’s looking forward to establishing ties in China.”

Recent events have had mixed responses.

In July, Chinese Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding was released after 15 months in detention and, in his first Mass upon release, made a point of stating that he had not accepted the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, nor the authority of the Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church in China, which are government-approved Church bodies.

China began suppressing the Church in the late 1950s when it established the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, whose members initially were asked to reject ties with the Vatican.

Catholics who refused to join the patriotic association and overtly maintained their loyalty to the Vatican suffered decades of persecution.

For decades, the Catholic Church in China has existed with two communities: one in which Catholics register with the Chinese authorities - and therefore operate under certain official limits - and one in which Catholics practise the faith in a more clandestine fashion, who are known as the “underground Church” which is loyal to the Pope.

Recent progress was made in April when two Bishops were ordained with both the Pope’s and the Chinese government’s approval – the first Bishops ordained in mainland China since December 2007.

A 2007 letter from Pope Benedict XVI to Chinese Catholics urged reconciliation between the communities, which in some parts of China operate in the same areas, and emphasised that

some aspects of the patriotic association were incompatible with Church teaching and said the Holy See “leaves the decision to the individual Bishop,” having consulted his priests, “to weigh ... and to evaluate the possible consequences” of joining the association.

* The Record reports news of the parish, the nation and the world on a weekly basis with a special focus on the life of the Catholic Church in Western Australia.

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

Debates continue over bishop's installation

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By ucanews.com reporter, Hong Kong

The installation of Coadjutor Bishop Francis An Shuxin as the bishop of Baoding's 'open' Church community has continued to provoke intense debate.

Since his installation on Aug. 7, questions have been raised on Chinese Catholic websites over what the status of the former 'underground' coadjutor will be, with the concurrent presence of Bishop James Su Zhimin (alias Zhemin) of Baoding who is under detention.

Some have also questioned how the Holy See's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples advised Bishop An on the issue, if the Vatican knew the actions of the bishop well, as it had stated in a letter in 2008.

“How can unity in Baoding be possible if the Congregation remains silent on the issue?” asked one poster, while another one said, “it's time for the Holy See to rethink its policy, otherwise another farce will get on stage.”

A canonist who preferred to remain anonymous told ucanews.com that an installation ceremony is not restricted to bishops only.

“Even a priest can have an installation when he is transferred to a new parish,” he said. “So Bishop An's installation does not mean there is any change to his status, if he understands his own situation.”

Meanwhile, some commentators on Church affairs in China predict that Bishop An could face more difficulties than other underground bishops who were installed in the open Church before him.

“The installation is a good thing for the government, but it’s premature to say if it’s good for the Church,” said Kwun Ping-hung, a Hong Kong based observer. “The government hopes to manage the underground-dominated Baoding Church through Bishop An’s leadership. But achieving reconciliation in the way Rome would like to see it will be difficult.”

“Even the letter from Cardinal Bertone, the Vatican’s Secretary of State, to Bishop An last February only brought some of the underground priests back to his side. So there is still no unity,” Kwun said. “Since the case has become a concern among Catholics, the Holy See should make its position clear, in order to be accountable to Bishop Su, to the Boading Chuurch and the China Church,” he added.

However, clergy from the ‘open’ community and other observers say that Bishop An made the right move by associating with the government.

“I believe the Vatican has compromised with the government on this case,” said Ren Yanli, a retired resaeacher based in Beijing. “This is what is needed for the ultimate good of the Church in China, though it will take time for Bishop An to change the underground community’s mentality.”

AsiaNews - www.asianews.it

08/16/2010 15:27

CHINA

Gansu Catholics remember Zhouqu victims on Assumption Day

by Annie Lam

A national day of mourning is held to remember the victims of the 7 August mudslides. In churches, prayers and silence resound. In many places, the procession with the statue of Our Lady is cancelled. Lanzhou bishop speaks on the matter.

Lanzhou (AsiaNews) – Catholics in Gansu province joined others nationwide to observe a day of national mourning on 15 August for those who died in Zhouqu (Gansu), where a torrent of mud and floodwaters engulfed three villages on 7 August. The day also marked the Assumption of Mary, one of the four major Catholic festivities in China. Crowds of Catholics gathered in churches to celebrate the religious event and pray for the victims.

National flags flew at half-mast and many public events were cancelled as a show of respect. Representatives from government, medical teams, army and all sectors, each with a white flower, gathered in Zhouqu and Lanzhou squares to observe a three-minute moment of silence to mourn the dead. Many were moved to tears.

Zhouqu's death toll currently stands at 1,248 with 496 people still missing. Zhouqu County government announced plans to erect a monument with the inscribed names of all those who died from the mudslides.

Bishop Han Zhihai of Lanzhou (Gansu) told AsiaNews that in churches Catholics also observed a three-minute moment of silence at 10 am, to remember the people in Zhouqu and elsewhere who suffered or were victims of the rains and floods.

Zhouqu, located between Lanzhou and Tianshui dioceses, is inhabited by some Tibetans but has no Catholics or churches, Bishop Han said. However, in areas in Longnan, which is near Zhouqu, there are some Catholic peasant families who were by heavy rains, he added.

On Assumption Day, Bishop Han said he blessed a new church in Jiayuguan, which can accommodate 200 faithful.

Diocesan administrator Father Zhao Jianzhang of Tianshui told AsiaNews that local Catholics prayed for the victims in Zhouqu, that they might overcome their hardships as soon as possible. He also noted that they prayed for peace in the country as well.

In his homily during the 15 August Mass, he reminded all the faithful to pray and donate for the needy.

Tianshui has about 20,000 Catholics, who are served by 13 priests.

In other parts of China, some parishes have cancelled processions in which Marian statues are carried out of respect for the national mourning.

Prayers and encouraging words for Zhouqu victims were posted on Catholic websites and in chat groups. As a sign of mourning for Zhouqu victims, some sites even switched to a black-and-white display.

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

Bishop Francis An Shuxin openly installed

Published Date: August 9, 2010

By ucanews.com reporter, Beijing

Coadjutor Bishop Francis An Shuxin of Baoding, a former leading figure in northern China's "underground" Church community, has been installed as the ordinary of the "open" community at Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Baoding city.

The installation Mass was led by Bishop An with retired Bishop John Liu Jinghe and Bishop Peter Fang Jianping, both of Tangshan, along with 24 priests from local and neighboring dioceses and a congregation of around 500 on Aug. 7.

The installation has caused greater division between the two Church communities.

“It is just a formality required by the government to recognize him. His own decision is most important. For me, he is my bishop, installed or not,” an “open” priest said. But one of the 40 underground priests who chose not to attend the ceremony, said there is “no more space for reconciliation” for the time being.

“At a meeting in June, we reminded Bishop An to be loyal to the Church, his faith and the Pope’s letter. It is he who has not followed the faith, not we who are refusing to reconcile,” he said.

“We will see what Rome will say this time,” he said, noting that Bishop An is still the coadjutor for Rome unless Bishop James Su Zhimin (alias Zhemin), the ordinary of Baoding who has been detained since 1997, is asked to retire.

Bishop An has encountered controversy in the past. He was released from a 10-year detention in 2006 and allowed to work openly. He then took up a post in July 2009 at the Catholic Patriotic Association, an organization described in the Pope’s letter as “incompatible” with Catholic doctrines.

The Congregation of Evangelization for the Peoples issued a statement months later denying a media report that the Holy See pressed Bishop An to leave his “underground” status and register with the CPA.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican’s secretary of state, wrote to Bishop An in February to tell him that his decision to join the CPA “should have been avoided” and ask him not to abandon the possibility of acting in line with official Church protocol.

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‘Matteo Ricci volunteers’ fan out across China

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By ucanews.com reporter, Shijiazhuang

Some young Catholics are heading out to work as “Matteo Ricci Volunteers” in various Church-run operations in China, including a leprosy convalescent home, orphanages, schools and HIV/AIDS treatment centers.

The 19 high school and university graduates will work on assignments lasting from six months to two years, starting in August.

The program is organized by Jinde Charities, a Catholic NGO based in Shijiazhuang, Hebei.

It is named in honor of Father Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary and pioneer of the Catholic Church in China, to mark the 400th anniversary of his death.

“Today’s young people rarely get the chance to serve others,” said program coordinator Hu Limin. “We hope that being ‘Matteo Ricci Volunteers’ will help them to grow in maturity.”

The group received nine days of training on topics such as how to serve people with HIV/AIDS and leprosy as well as interpersonal relationships and psychology.

“Jinde also pays for insurance and transport for all the volunteers and we give them some pocket money so they can focus on their service,” said Hu.

“I’m hoping this will train me to handle challenges,” said 22-year-old volunteer Mary Liu. “I want to do something worthwhile while I’m young and make a contribution to the Church.”

The medical graduate will go to Guangxi on Aug. 15 and stay there for a year, working with HIV/AIDS infected children. “I admit I’m afraid,” she said.

“My desire is to seek a new understanding on life,” said another volunteer, 24-year-old Yang Shuai. “I want to develop my faith and personality through this. Meeting friends who cherish the same ideals **has already strengthened my confidence and courage.**”

END